

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASH DC 3022

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 2155

BEIRUT FOR LABATT

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, EAID, KU

SUBJ: PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS CHIEF EXPRESSES LUKEWARM INTEREST
IN USG PROGRAMS

REF: KUWAIT 1674; KUWAIT A-25, MARCH 6, 1975.

1. IN RECENT MEETING WITH PRESIDENT KUWAIT FEDERATION PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES, MUHAMMAD AL-USSEIMI, EMBOFF EXPLORED WITH HIM POSSIBILITY FEDERATION PARTICIPATING IN USG SPONSORED COURSES FOR LABOR LEADERS, AMONG OTHER THINGS. USSEIMI EXPRESSED INTEREST IN THE IDEA WHICH SEEMED TO GO BEYOND ARAB POLITESSE BUT MADE NO COMMITMENTS.

2. EMBOFF BRIEFLY OUTLINED SOME OF COURSES WHICH HAVE BEEN OFFERED IN PAST BY AID/OLAB, INDICATING THESE COURSES WERE INTENDED TO ASSIST FOREIGN LABOR LEADERS IN SERVING THEIR MEMBERSHIP BY STRENGTHENING POLICY FORMULATION, ADMINISTRATIVE, AND NEGOTIATING SKILLS. USSEIMI STATED HE WOULD BE HAPPY TO CONSIDER AN INVITATION (HOPEFULLY A GRANT) FOR A MEMBER OF HIS FEDERATION TO ATTEND COURSES IN THE U.S., BUT INDICATED, BECAUSE IT CAME FROM USG, THE INVITATION SHOULD GO TO THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND LABOR FOR TRANSMISSION TO HIS FEDERATION. EMBOFF POINTED OUT THAT, WHILE HE FELT CERTAIN MINISTRY WOULD WELCOME SUCH PARTICIPATION, MINISTER RECENTLY HAD INDICATED
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HE PREFERRED FOR US TO GO DIRECTLY TO THE LABOR UNIONS WITH SUCH

MATTERS (SINCE TO DO OTHERWISE MIGHT IMPLY THAT THE MINISTRY WAS TRYING TO INTERFERE WITH THE UNIONS) (REFTEL). NEVERTHELESS, USSEIMI STUCK TO HIS POSITION, ALTHOUGH HE CONCEDED IT WOULD BE ALL RIGHT FOR US TO NOTIFY HIM SUCH AN INVITATION HAD BEEN TRANSMITTED TO THE MINISTRY.

3. ACTION REQUESTED: WHILE EMBASSY ADMITTEDLY "GREEN" IN DEALING WITH LABOR PROGRAMMING, WE THINK BEST COURSE OF ACTION FOR PRESENT WOULD BE FOR CONCERNED AGENCIES TO FURNISH US WITH FULL INFORMATION ON SUITABLE COURSES FOR KUWAITI PUBLIC SECTOR UNION MEMBERS AVAILABLE FROM AID/ILAB OR OTHER IN FALL/WINTER FY 76. EMBASSY COULD THEN FLOAT TRIAL BALLOON AT SENIOR LEVEL OF MINISTRY AND WITH USSEIMI TO SEE IF ANY OF COURSES OFFERED LIKELY TO ELICIT POSITIVE RESPONSE. WE ASSUME USG COULD PROVIDE GRANT FOR KUWAITI LABOR LEADER SINCE IT IS US AND NOT THE KUWAITIS WHO ARE TAKING INITIATIVE IN THIS AREA. IF WE CANNOT OFFER TO SHOULD COST, ENTIRE MATTER IS PROBABLY ALREADY DEAD ISSUE.

4. COMMENT: ATTITUDE OF USSEIMI WAS SOMEWHAT SURPRISING, ALTHOUGH SEEMINGLY GENUINE. HE WAS MEMBER OF LAST NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND OFTEN VOTED WITH THE SMALL FAR LEFT BLOC IN THAT BODY. HE OPENLY ADMITS HE HAS TWICE MADE OFFICIAL VISITS TO THE SOVIET UNION, ONCE AS A MEMBER OF A PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION, AND EARLIER AS A UNION LEADER. HE CLAIMS TO BE EVEN-HANDED IN HIS WILLINGNESS TO DEAL WITH EAST AND WEST. EVEN IF SINCERE, IT BY NO MEANS CERTAIN OTHERS ON HIS EXECUTIVE BOARD WOULD PERMIT A POSITIVE RESPONSE TO USG INVITATION. NEVERTHELESS, THIS FIRST TIME IN RECENT HISTORY THAT DOOR TO SUCH AN EXCHANGE WITH KUWAITI LABOR UNIONS HAS BEEN AJAR AND WE PROBABLY HAVE LITTLE TO LOSE BY MAKING AN ATTEMPT TO OPEN IT WIDER. MINISTER OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND LABOR, SHAIKH SALEM AL-SABAH, (UNTIL RECENTLY KUWAIT'S AMBASSADOR TO U.S.), HAD MADE CLEAR TO AMBASSADOR AND EMBOFFS HE WOULD WELCOME SOME INITIATIVE FROM US TOWARDS KUWAIT'S LABOR MOVEMENT.

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